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*African Trial*

*Transition* is an uncommonly lively and useful African journal published up to now in Kampala, Uganda. One must say "up to now" because *Transition's* editor, an opposition parliamentarian who writes for it, and its printer are currently on trial for sedition as a result of their journalistic product. The case has attracted considerable attention as a test of the measure of press freedom which uncertain new African states are prepared to tolerate. And because the editor, Rajat Neogy, is an Indian who claims Ugandan citizenship, the case is also a significant episode in the "Africanization" of East Africa.

The basis of the sedition charge offers a sobering insight into the nature of African politics in this frustrating period when the exhilaration of attaining independence has given way to the difficult and seemingly endless business of nation-building. An aide in Ugandan President Obote's office had published a *Transition* article saying that the High Court should not merely interpret laws of Parliament but extend its powers and punish those it found to be in opposition to the government's ideology, regardless of whether the offender had broken an existing law. In the course of a retort, oppositionist Abubakar Mayanja hinted that President Obote's inability to find qualified men in his own tribe had kept him from appointing black Africans to the bench. The sedition charges followed.

No government, and certainly not a new African government, can afford to trifle with its own citizens' confidence and the world community's respect by treating fair criticism as "sedition." The trial in Kampala will be closely watched to see how it conforms to by this crucial standard.